# Auto-Captioning Starter Guide

This is a quick starter guide on using auto-captioning technology to improve sound access in meetings, events, presentations, and lectures.

# What are auto-captions?

Automated captions, or auto-captions, rely on automated speech recognition software to convert spoken audio into text on a screen. They can be included in videos (such as with [YouTube’s auto-captioning](https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/6373554?hl=en)) or projected on a screen during live events.

Auto-captioning is not a quick fix. It does not solve all issues related to sound access. Professionally generated [closed/open captioning](https://blog.ai-media.tv/blog/the-difference-between-open-and-closed-captions) and [CART (Communication Access Realtime Translation)](http://ccacaptioning.org/faqs-cart/) are often better options for accuracy and clarity. See also: [#NoMoreCraptions](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-O4YcVQt5NM).

However, if used with practice and planning, automated captions are a low-cost option that can provide a measure of accessibility for your audience.

# What are some options for auto-captioning presentations and events?

1. [Microsoft Translator for Education](https://translator.microsoft.com/help/education/)
   1. Free downloadable add-on for Microsoft PowerPoint.
   2. Requires Windows 8 or later, and PowerPoint 2013 or later. Works on Windows only.
   3. The captions will be visible below or above the slides.
   4. Captioning accuracy can be improved by typing in jargon in the speakers notes, or even better, scripting the presentation fully.
   5. Audience members can join the conversation using the [app](https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/translator/apps/features/) or [website](https://translator.microsoft.com/) to see the captions and send questions/comments.
   6. Allows for translated captions and comments in over 60 languages, viewable in each participant’s chosen language.
   7. [Download Microsoft Translator for Education here](https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/download/details.aspx?id=55024).
2. [Google Slides](https://support.google.com/docs/answer/9109474?hl=en)
   1. Feature of all Google Slides presentations for free.
   2. Requires a Google account, Google Chrome browser, and an internet connection.
   3. The captions will be visible above or below the slides.
   4. Captioning accuracy can be improved by typing in jargon in the speakers notes, or even better, scripting the presentation fully.
   5. Available only in English.
   6. PowerPoint presentations can be [uploaded to Google Slides](https://www.howtogeek.com/398543/how-to-import-a-powerpoint-presentation-into-google-slides/).
3. [Microsoft Translator app and website](https://translator.microsoft.com/)
   1. Free downloadable Android and iOS app. Also available on browser, Amazon device, and Windows desktop.
   2. The same as Microsoft Translator for Education, just without PowerPoint integration.
   3. There is no option to input jargon without PowerPoint speakers notes.
   4. Best for one-on-one or group conversations.
   5. Works in over 60 languages, viewable in each participant’s chosen language.
   6. [Download the Translator app here](https://translator.microsoft.com/) or access it via browser at [translate.it](http://translate.it/).
4. [Live Transcribe app](https://www.android.com/accessibility/live-transcribe/)
   1. Free downloadable Android app by Google.
   2. Best for one-on-one or small group conversations.
   3. Available only on Android devices with 5.0 Lollipop and up.
   4. Works with over 70 languages and dialects.
   5. [Download the Live Transcribe app here.](https://www.android.com/accessibility/live-transcribe/)
5. [Google Meet](https://apps.google.com/meet/how-it-works/)
   1. Free and paid videoconferencing platform with captioning.
   2. Available on Android app, iOS app, and browser. Paid version allows for participants to dial into meetings with a phone.
   3. Free version requires all participants to use a Google account (same as Gmail account) to join.
   4. Paid version requires the meeting organizer to be a G Suite user. It allows for people to join without a Google account or by phone.
   5. The captioning can be toggled on or off for each individual participant in the call.
   6. Captions indicate who is speaking at a given time.
   7. No transcript of the captioning is saved by Google Meet, but this can be done through third-party apps like [Tactiq](https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/tactiq-for-google-meet/).
   8. There is no option to input special terms or jargon.
   9. Available only in English.
   10. [Read instructions on how to start a call here.](https://support.google.com/meet/answer/9302870?hl=en&ref_topic=7192926)
   11. [Read instructions on how to join a call here](https://support.google.com/meet/answer/9303069?hl=en&ref_topic=7192926).
   12. [Read instructions on how to turn on captioning here](https://support.google.com/meethardware/answer/9495962?hl=en).
6. [Skype](https://www.skype.com/en/blogs/2018-12-live-captions-and-subtitles/)
   1. Free videoconferencing platform available on Android, iOS, Windows, Mac, Linux, Alexa, Xbox, and browser. Paid calls to mobile phones and landlines.
   2. Captions indicate who is speaking at a given time using their icon.
   3. No transcript of the captioning is saved by Skype.
   4. There is no option to input special terms or jargon.
   5. Works in 11 languages, viewable in each participant’s chosen language.
   6. [Download Skype here](https://www.skype.com/en/get-skype/).
   7. [Read instructions on how to turn on captioning here](https://support.skype.com/en/faq/FA34877/how-do-i-turn-live-captions-subtitles-on-during-a-skype-call).

# Tips

* **Even if you do not wish to include visuals, you can** **open a blank presentation** to use Microsoft Translator and Google Slides.
* **Include unusual terms and jargon in the speakers notes** of your PowerPoint or Google Slides presentation, so that the auto-captioning knows how to spell them.
* **Make sure that you have good audio quality** going into the device that is creating the captions. Direct audio input, such as through a USB microphone or a headset with microphone, is best.
* **Test your captioning software ahead of time!** Practice speaking aloud with it turned on. You can “teach” the auto-captioning technology your accent by spending 5 minutes with it.
* **Speak slowly and clearly.** Try to speak a moderate pace and e-nun-ci-ate. Pause at the end of sentences.
* **Listen to those in your audience who are struggling with sound access.** Invite opinions, criticism, and suggestions on ways to improve accessibility of all kinds. Provide a variety of ways to give feedback. Make space for a collective effort to improve access for everyone.